

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCA-01 VO-03 PA-01 PRS-01 CIAE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 SAJ-01 CPR-01 FBIE-00 INSE-00 CU-02

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O R 091535Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1630

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

USIA WASHDC

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PRAGUE 3493

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, CZ

SUBJECT: SEEGER VISA REFUSAL

REF STATE 298785

1. PRIOR TO RECEIPT OF REFTEL, IN COURSE OF NEARLY TWO-HOUR TOUR D'HORIZON DECEMBER 8 WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CHNOUPEK(BEING REPORTED SEPTEL), I RAISED QUESTION OF GOC VISA REFUSAL TO L.A. TIMES CORRESPONDENT SEEGER. I EMPHASIZED THAT EMBASSY COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY VISA WAS NOT GRANTED TO REPRESENTATIVE OF MAJOR "HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER" WISHING TO COVER VISIT TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA OF LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA. MOREOVER, EMBASSY WAS PARTICULARLY DISAPPOINTED OVER THE REFUSAL AT THIS TIME, BARELY A WEEK AFTER CONCLUSION OF NEGOTIATIONS ON EXCHANGES AGREEMENT--THE REFUSAL MAKES US ALREADY WONDER ABOUT UTILITY OF THE EXCHANGES AGREEMENT. DISCUSSION OF SEEGER REFUSAL CAME UP IN CONTEXT OF MY REMARKS STRESSING CONTINUING USG CONCERN OVER THE PERVASIVELY ANTI-AMERICAN REPORTAGE OF CZECHOSLOVAK MEDIA. I NOTED, FOR THE RECORD, THAT US LAW PROVIDES FOR ISSUANCE OF VISAS TO FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS STRICTLY ON BASIS OF RECIPROCITY AND THAT EMBASSY KNOWS OF SEVERAL INSTANCES OF GOC REFUSAL TO GRANT VISAS TO JOURNALISTS SINCE THE AUGUST 1975 HELSINKI SUMMIT MEETING OF CSCE.

2. CHNOUPEK FEIGNED IGNORANCE OF THE SEEGER REFUSAL, BUT, TURNING
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TO ZANTOVSKY, SAID HE WOULD "LOOK INTO IT." ZANTOVSKY REMARKED

DEFENSIVELY THAT MFA HAD JUST THAT DAY AUTHORIZED VISA ISSUANCE TO MALCOLM BROWNE OF NY TIMES. IT WAS UNDERSTOOD THAT MFA WOULD PROVIDE EMBASSY SUBSEQUENTLY WITH SOME KIND OF EXPLANATION ON THIS AND OTHER RECENT BILATERAL PROBLEMS OF CURRENT INTEREST.

3. COMMENT: I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT CHNOUPEK WAS TRULY UNAWARE OF THE SEEGER TURN-DOWN BECAUSE I HAD TELEPHONED DEPFONMIN SPACIL ABOUT THE MATTER DECEMBER 7. SPACIL TOO PROMISED TO LOOK INTO THE QUESTION AND CALL THE EMBASSY BACK, BUT HE FAILED TO DO SO BEFORE THE MEETING WITH CHNOUPEK.

4. ON DECEMBER 9, DCM CZLLED ZANTOVSKY FOR APPOINTMENT, WHICH HAS BEEN SET FOR 1400 HOURS DECEMBER 10. AT THAT TIME, DCM WILL SEEK EXPLANATION OF CZECHOSLOVAK DECISION TO DENY VISA TO SEEGER.
BYRNE

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